

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph 1 with the following amended paragraph:

The primary antimicrobial agent used in this invention (to ensure a microbiologically stable and non-sour tasting beverage) should be suitable for use in a beverage composition. Such an agent, when monoprotic, typically has a pKa of less than about 2.6, and preferably, has a pKa from about -7.0 to about 2.5, and most preferably, from about 1.25 to about 2.5, including all ranges subsumed therein. When polyprotic, the antimicrobial agent typically has a pKa₁ of less than about 2.6 and a pKa₂ of less than about 3 or greater than about 6. Illustrative non-limiting examples of such antimicrobial agents include sodium bisulfate, potassium bisulfate, ammonium bisulfate, hydrochloric acid, phosphoric acid as well as hydrochlorides glycine, alanine, valine, leucine, isoleucine, phenylalanine, asparagine, glytamineglutamine, tryptophan, serine, tyrosine, hydroxyproline, cysteine, proline mixtures thereof or the like. It is also within the scope of this invention to employ polypeptides that have backbones and side chains consistent with the above-identified pKa values.